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*THE HARVARD EXPEDITION TO SAMARIA*

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The ruins of the ancient capital of Israel lie on a large, detached hill about six miles northwest of Nablus and twenty miles from the Mediterranean. The hill rises about three hundred and fifty feet above the surrounding valleys, and about fourteen hundred and fifty feet above the sea. It is enclosed by mountains, some of which reach a much greater height. At its base the hill has the appearance of being between four and five miles in circuit. The ascent is everywhere steep, but, owing to a saddle connecting with the mountains on the east, is less steep on that side than on the others. Like all the mountains about it, the hill is covered with large artificial terraces, constructed to prevent the washing away of the soil and to make cultivation easier. The surface of these terraces has a gentle slope, but their sides are in many places so steep as to be climbed only with great difficulty. The entire hill is under cultivation, and there are extensive olive orchards, interspersed with fig and pomegranate trees.

On the eastern slope is a village of about eight hundred inhabitants (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The name of this village, Sebastiyeh (pronounced by the natives Sebustye), perpetuates the name Sebaste, which, in honor of Augustus, Herod gave to the city when he rebuilt it. On the western slope are the ruins of two towers, flanking the gateway through an ancient wall. The principal path on the hill runs south of the summit from this gateway to the village, half a mile distant. It passes by the side of a long row of columns, some standing, some prostrate, which were part of a great colonnade erected by Herod. There is also a group of columns on the

<sup>1</sup> Figures 1, 2, 3, and 7 are drawn by Mr. Clarence S. Fisher. The material for figures 1 and 3 comes almost entirely from larger plans drawn by Dr. Gottlieb Schumacher.

western side of the threshing floor just above the village, commonly supposed to be the remains of a Herodian temple. These form an eastern and a western row; several fallen columns lie scattered about the threshing floor. The area of the threshing floor may be about two acres. Here the heaping up of the harvest begins in May, and the slow process of threshing continues throughout the summer—a circumstance which will make the exploration at this spot especially difficult. To the north of this, about halfway down to the valley, are other rows of columns defining two sides of a structure of great extent, perhaps a hippodrome, or circus. Fragments of columns and carved stones from ancient buildings are built into the houses or lie about the streets of the village; others are found in the walls which divide the fields or are scattered here and there over the ground.

Though long recognized as an important site for exploration, Samaria has deterred explorers by its extent, and by the great cost of the undertaking. The new Turkish law relating to antiquities is very strict, being much like those of Greece and Italy. No one may dig without a permit from the Sultan, and every object found is the property of the government. The discoverer may have photographs, casts, and squeezes, and he may publish the results of his work. The enlargement of knowledge is therefore the only incentive to exploration.

The expenses of the Harvard expedition to Samaria are borne by Mr. Jacob H. Schiff, of New York. In 1905 application was made at Constantinople for a permit, which was granted about two years later. Professor George A. Reisner, who had been originally chosen to conduct the expedition, being at the time engaged in the archaeological survey of Upper Egypt, the work at Samaria was intrusted to Doctor Gottlieb Schumacher, of Haifa, who has long resided in the land, and has had much experience in Palestinian excavations. Professor Reisner was able, however, to take a brief leave of absence in April, 1908, when he and Dr. Schumacher went to Samaria and laid out the work to be undertaken the first year. It is expected that next year Professor Reisner will be in charge as originally planned. The present writer joined the expedition in May. With him went Mr. Clarence S. Fisher, of Philadelphia, in the capacity of architect and drafts-

man. Mr. Oric Bates, of Boston, was also on the ground during a part of April.

The actual digging went on only nine weeks (April 24 to May 1, May 22 to June 3, and July 11 to August 21). The interruptions were caused by local difficulties, which happily did not occur again during July and August. The digging was done by men, while women, boys, and girls removed the earth and débris in baskets. The number of laborers varied from ten at the end of the second period to about four hundred during a considerable part of the third. Throughout the second period, the demands of the harvest, and the uncertainty overhanging the work owing to local difficulties, kept the number small and inefficient. The laborers came from Sebastiyeh and the neighboring villages.

The digging was carried on at two points. The first of these was among the standing columns beside the threshing floor (Fig. 2). On the steep downward slope to the north of the columns a trench running east and west (A)<sup>2</sup> was begun, in order to determine whether dump heaps might be made here without covering up important remains. Rude stone walls were struck near the surface. Below these, at one point, at a depth of about fifteen feet, a wall of dressed blocks of stone was found. Another trench, or rather a pit (B), was dug beside a column which seemed to belong to the southern side of the temple, the floor level being reached at a depth of about ten feet. The column stood on a socle, and was twisted partly out of position as if by earthquake. To the east of it at the level of the socle lay a second column, the end of which projected into the pit. A third pit (C), still further east, was not carried below some late rough walls which were found just below the surface. North of the eastern row of standing columns, and in a line with it, a trench (D) was dug. A few inches below the surface four socles in a line were uncovered. This trench was further lengthened during the third period of digging, and several additional socles were found (Fig. 4). During the same period a fifth pit (M) was dug at the intersection of the western and the southern lines of columns, with a view to determining the southwest angle of the building. No socle was found; but at a depth of about fifteen feet the remains of the foundation

<sup>2</sup> This trench was a little further north than the space covered by Fig. 2.

were laid bare—a broad wall running from the corner toward the east and toward the north.

The main work of excavation in this building was undertaken along the northern end, cutting back toward the south, on a level with the floor, the space limited by the eastern and western rows of columns. On the eastern end of this cut, about three feet below the surface, we found the top of a foundation wall running east and west. It rests on the rock, and is now fourteen feet high and six feet broad. On the western end of the cut, in a line with the wall just described, was the northern side of a wall of fine masonry of large, well-fitted blocks of stone. This wall turned south in a line with the western row of standing columns, and appears, therefore, to be the northwestern corner of the building. As we cut backward toward the south it became evident that much of the excellent masonry (Fig. 5) at this point was made of stones not in their original position. They had been used again by later architects. A broad curve in the masonry on its inner side suggested the apse of a church, and various details made it probable that the later structure had belonged to the Byzantine period. The original building seems clearly a temple of Roman times. Beneath it we may expect Hebrew remains. If the columns lying about the threshing floor belonged to it, the building was one of vast proportions, and a thorough exploration of it will require the work of a large force for many months.

Of small objects, there were found in these trenches, near the surface, more than two hundred clay lamps from the Arabic period; and, deeper, great masses of broken Roman roof tiles and many fragments of glass vessels and of Greek and Roman pottery.

The second point of excavation was the summit and on the two terraces west of it (Figs. 1 and 3). The lower terrace is an olive grove, and is separated from the upper by a steep and high embankment. A trench (E) was here cut in a direction east and west, and at its eastern end carried to the rock. The foundations of house walls were struck only a few inches below the surface. At the upper edge of the embankment is a massive but rude wall (Fig. 6), probably of Arabic origin, running at this point north and south following the line of the terrace. The embankment was cut

back to a point directly underneath this wall, and then tunnelled on a line with the rock. A few feet back was found the outer face of a massive wall (Fig. 7), resting on the rock, and running north and south. The large size of the stones, the mode of dressing, and the fact that the wall is buried beneath about thirty feet of débris seem to make it certain that this is a Hebrew wall—a conclusion confirmed by finding nearby several similar stones with marks such as have been found elsewhere and recognized as made by Hebrew masons. The way in which these loose stones lie suggests that they once formed part of the wall. Of this wall, five courses of stone are still in position. The upper surface of the wall was also reached by the trench (F) on the upper terrace, at a depth of about twenty-one feet, and cleared toward the east for about fourteen feet. This great thickness indicates that the wall must have been one of importance, perhaps the wall of the city or of a citadel. The discovery of the wall came too late in our work to allow further exploration, which must here be slow on account of the great overlying mass of débris.

The trench (F) on the upper terrace continued that on the lower, though not in a straight line. It was carried to the rock at two points. At the western end it came upon the upper surface of the Hebrew wall, as already described. Just to the east of this is another wall of smaller stones, resting on the rock and reaching up almost to the present level. Near its base are other loose building blocks, about as large as those in the trench on the lower terrace. Some of the fragments of pottery seem to be of Hebrew origin. Near the middle of the trench were found two cisterns cut in the rock. One of these was cleared of the rubbish which filled it, and it yielded a large quantity of potsherds and bones. The other had, above the rock, a fine rectangular shaft about eight feet deep, formed of squared stones. Leading to the top of this shaft, about five feet below the present level of the ground, was a plastered drain of stone, by which the cistern was fed. Nearby was a variety of rude walls and small chambers, belonging to ancient buildings. At its eastern end this trench ended at the embankment which separates the terrace from the summit.

It was on the summit that most of our work was done. The present form of the summit is due to dumping and levelling, as is

evident from the stratification of the débris (Fig. 8). In the east and west trench (G; Fig. 3) continuing that of the upper terrace was found on June 2, the day before the second period of work closed, a section of a stairway ascending from the north. Fourteen steps were partially uncovered, the uppermost five feet below the surface, the lowest about thirteen feet. One of the steps was dug out to a length of sixteen feet. The blocks of stone composing the stairway are about a yard long, and each tread overlaps by several inches the next lower tread. The height of the risers was about seven inches, and the breadth varied from  $14\frac{1}{2}$  to  $15\frac{1}{2}$  inches, except in the case of the seventh from above, which is a landing about three feet broad. The stones were well cut and well laid, and the whole staircase, as far as uncovered in June, remarkably well preserved. In the débris were found large quantities of stucco in several colors, but in a condition too fragmentary to make possible the restoration of any of the figures of the decoration.

When the work began again in July, our first task was exploration of the stairway, and we expected to find at its top the base of a column from which three drums about four feet in diameter, on the embankment between the summit and the western terrace, might have come. At the same time two other trenches were started, one running north from where we first struck the stairway (I), the other (H) running south from a point a few feet further to the east. The summit was thus cut into four sections, one of which, the northwestern, we cleared away down to the level of the terrace.

The trench east and west was broadened toward the north and the south, thus laying bare the stairway through its whole width (Fig. 9), which, as indicated by the lines of masonry supporting the eastern and the western ends, was originally eighty feet. Every step has, however, suffered more or less loss at both ends. In the present condition the shortest step is about fifty-seven feet long, and the longest about seventy-three. The steps are sixteen in number. At the top may have been one or two more in order to reach the platform soon to be described. At the foot is a seventeenth step, of softer stone, and consequently much more worn away. Near the eastern end are two other short steps at the foot, likewise much worn. The dimensions and condition of these

three are so different from those of the sixteen as to suggest a different period of construction. At its foot the stairway is supported by a wall of rude masonry, which may be of earlier date. We cleared this wall in part to the level of the rock, about eight feet below. There is another wall, still rougher, running the length of the stairway at its top.

About twelve feet south of the stairway, and from one to two feet below the surface, we found a floor, or platform (Figs. 9, 16), paved with thick slabs of stone. These are of varying size, in general smaller than those composing the stairway. This platform may have been as long as the steps; but has suffered by the removal of stones from its edges. In the present state it is nearly rectangular, its length east and west being fifty-seven feet and its greatest width about twenty-seven. Between the stairway and the platform were found two other large drums of a column.

In the trench running to the south (H), about three feet below the surface, we found a large piece of mosaic floor; a deep cistern at the southern end; and many massive walls of crude workmanship. Near the northern end a cross-wall (Fig. 14, left edge) of later date was preserved almost to the present level of the ground. North of this wall the rest of the trench was cleared down to the rock. There were great masses of débris, including numerous large building stones, many of them carved with designs of rosettes, leaves, and the egg-and-dart pattern.<sup>3</sup> In the rock were two cisterns or caves and several small bowl-like depressions; likewise shallow trenches or canals. One of these trenches, circular in shape, was part of an ancient oil or wine press. Half of it is concealed by the eastern stair wall, which is, therefore, of later date than the press.

This massive wall of large blocks of stone (Fig. 14) extends from the northeast corner of the stairway to the southern side of the platform. The northern part of this wall, east of the stairway, and the southern part, east of the platform, are in line; but the two sections are not bonded together, and the courses of stone composing them do not match (see also Fig. 17). Moreover, the southern part has a foundation consisting of three courses of smaller stones. These differences suggest that the two parts

<sup>3</sup> Some of these stones are now lying on the platform (Fig. 16).

are not of the same age. South of the platform the line of the wall is set back toward the west about one foot (Fig. 3), and then continues southward for an unknown distance. We followed it a hundred and thirty-five feet, to the edge of the plateau of the summit. Only the three lower courses of the foundation are preserved. The stones are set edgewise, the successive courses receding slightly from the perpendicular (Fig. 15). In all probability the higher courses have been removed for use in later buildings. Of such later use the evidence is abundant, fragments of columns, capitals, and other carved stones appearing in the walls now uncovered on the summit.

The long foundation probably belonged to the eastern wall of a temple. There was not time to trace the western wall, nor could we explore the large area between the two; all we had time for was a narrow trench (Fig. 3) running south from the middle of the southern side of the platform. In this trench several walls were met, some at right angles with the trench, others nearly parallel to it.

The wall bounding the stairway and the platform on the west is better preserved than that on the east, and both are several feet lower than the level of the platform. Between the stairway and the platform a trench was dug east and west. Here were found three bases of columns resting on a wall about eight feet thick (Fig. 17). The bases were in a line, and their diameters were about six feet. From their position on the eastern half of the wall one would judge that there may have been six or eight of the columns. The bases are all overturned, and the great wall on which they rest seems to be a foundation rather than a finished wall. They may have been overturned in order to extract for building material the better quality of finished stone on which they once rested. South of the platform is a similar cross-wall, not quite so thick. On the top of this was found a copper coin of Herod, of a well-known type.

All these enclosing walls are at present several feet lower than the platform (Fig. 9), and are probably of earlier date than the platform and the stairway. That other buildings still earlier occupied the site appears from the fact that a trench in the western part of the enclosure revealed other cross-walls beneath the mass of débris

on which the platform rests. It seems likely that this was a sacred spot from Hebrew times down.

On the west of the stairway we dug out a great chamber (Fig. 13) lying east and west, about forty by twenty feet. It is cut partly out of the rock, and its top, which seems to have been flat, is on a line with the bottom step of the stairway. Its northern wall is likewise in line with the northern wall supporting the stairway. In the northern wall of the chamber are two windows and a doorway, with several steps leading downward on the interior (Fig. 12). The walls are very massive, and the roof was an arch, of which the course next to the western wall of the stairway is still in place. All the rest of the roof was broken in. Among the architectural fragments in the débris was a large drum, coming perhaps from one of the columns which stood on the wall north of the platform. The walls of the chamber had been covered with a heavy coat of plaster, on which there seemed to be traces of color. In the eastern end of the floor is a large cavern or cistern, which we explored to a depth of about six feet. It was filled with large stones and earth, and was already filled when the chamber was in use, as is clear from the fact that the floor passes over the top of the cistern. Through this floor a trench was dug near the middle of the chamber, and the levels of earlier floors of stamped earth were thus brought to light. In the western wall is a doorway, the sill of which is on a level with the latest floor of the chamber. It may have led into other chambers. The western wall continues an unknown distance to the north of the chamber. Between it and the great stairway are several other massive walls, proceeding northward from the wall of the chamber (Fig. 13).

A few Greek graffiti were found, and about one hundred and fifty of the so-called Rhodian, stamped amphora-handles; also many fragments of Latin inscriptions on bits of marble slabs. The only complete inscription is on the side of a stele (Fig. 18) which was found on the stairway near the bottom. The stele is nearly four feet in height, and has a shallow, bowl-like depression on the top. Professor Clifford H. Moore, of Harvard University, has kindly resolved the abbreviations and translated the inscription:

J(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)  
mil(itis) VI XII  
coh(ortium) P(annoniorum) su-  
p(eriorum)  
cives Sisci(ani)  
II (?) Varcian(i)  
et Latobici  
sacrum fecer(unt)

To Jupiter Optimus Maximus,  
Soldiers of the Sixth and Twelfth  
Cohorts of Upper Pannonians,  
two (?) citizens of Siscia,  
(and) Varciani  
and Latobici,  
have made this dedication.

In the trench running north from the stairway, and only a few feet from it, was found, beneath about fifteen feet of débris, the torso of a statue of heroic size (Figs. 19, 20), finely carved out of a block of white marble. It was lying on its back. Head, arms, legs, and feet are gone, but the trunk is united to the base by a massive square column. The head, left arm, and one of the legs were attached by dowels, as appears from the sockets in the torso. The base is nearly three feet square and a little over five inches thick. Including the base, the figure is now, without its head, over eight feet in height. A robe is thrown over the left shoulder, and a breastplate covers the body. The dress, pose, and fine workmanship seem to make it certain that this statue is that of a Roman emperor, probably that of Augustus, though by a change of the head it may have served also for later emperors. Nearby was found a piece of a large hand which may have belonged to the statue. About two hundred feet to the south, at a depth of some eight feet, a fragment of a large head (Fig. 21) was excavated, of which the eyes, forehead, and part of the nose remain. Both material and work seem inferior to the statue; and the head probably belonged to a second piece of sculpture of heroic size. Our statue may have stood on a pedestal near where it lay, but no trace of a pedestal was discovered. The statue lay on a thin bed of earth of a gray color. This bed could be traced along the walls of the trench, and marks the beaten level at the time when the statue fell.

When the northwest section of the summit was dug away to the level of the terrace below, there appeared a few feet to the west of the statue and about the same distance to the north of the stairway, a Roman altar (Figs. 3, 9, 11), about thirteen feet long from east to west, and a little more than half as wide. Beneath the beaten

level just described (Fig. 11) is the foundation of rough stones on which the altar rests. Above this level the altar rises in six courses of stone, with mouldings near the top and bottom, to a height of about six feet. Part of the upper surface is gone. The walls of the altar were covered with stucco, some of which was still in position. East of the altar, and almost touching it, was a second stele, with a much-defaced Latin inscription. It is between three and four feet high, and rested in a socket which was buried in the earth to about the level of the beaten floor.<sup>4</sup> North and south of this were two similar sockets, in which other stelae doubtless once stood. No steps to the altar were found. From the north a broad inclined plane (Fig. 10) of gentle slope led up to its top. There may have been a revetment or a covering of stucco to cover the very rough masonry of this approach to the altar.

West of the altar a small space was cleared to the rock, and here were found two large blocks of stone, on one of which was a mark like those made by Hebrew masons. The stones probably come from a Hebrew building which may have stood near this spot.

In the trench containing the statue, and a few feet north of it, occurs a perpendicular cut in the rock, running east and west. The bottom of this cut is about seven feet deep, and to this depth a space of about sixteen feet square was cleared. The remarkable feature in this clearing is a rock column, nearly round, and about a yard in diameter. It stands in its original position, being cut out of the rock, to which it is still joined at the bottom. Further excavation may make its meaning clear. In the pit which revealed this column were found many fragments of colored stucco, several of them containing remnants of a Greek inscription, the letters of which are scratched through the paint. There are similar scratchings representing a bird and part of the figure of an animal.

The foregoing is an account of our first year's work at Samaria.

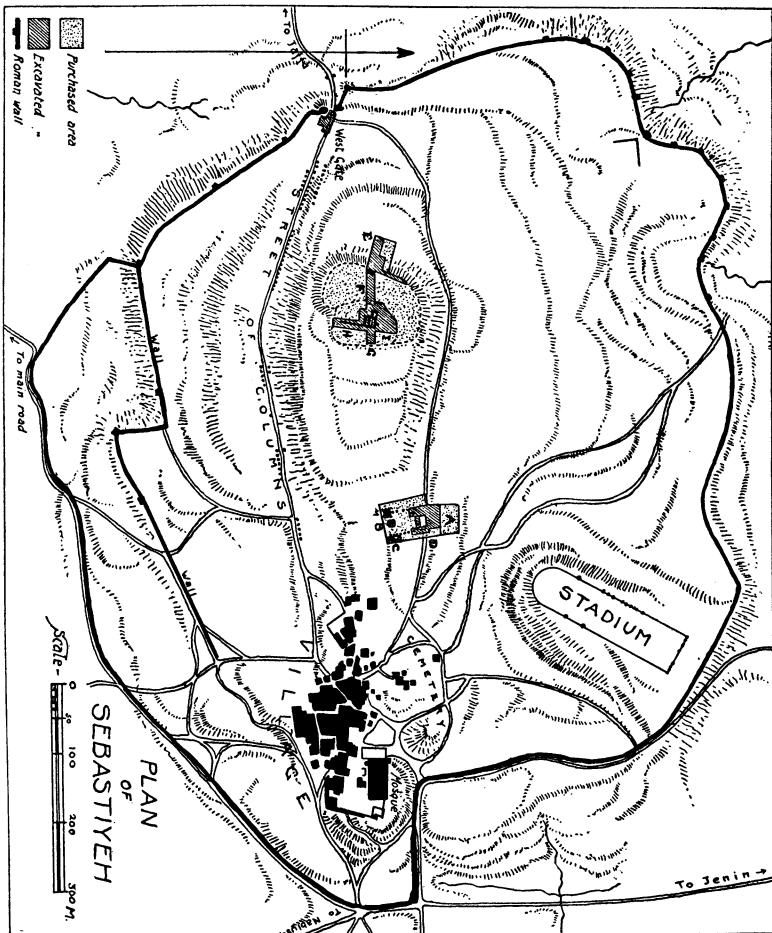
<sup>4</sup> Professor Clifford H. Moore thinks that this stele also may have been set up by soldiers from Pannonia, described in the inscription as *cives Bot(ivenses), or cives Bol(entiani.)* If the reading BOT is correct, the soldiers came from Botivo in Upper Pannonia. If BOL is the right reading, they came from Bolentium, also in Upper Pannonia.

While most of the structures whose remains have been discovered seem to be later than the Roman annexation of Palestine, the work has not gone far enough to make it possible to distinguish clearly the different periods represented, and all suggestions as to dates must be provisional. It seems very probable that the massive wall surrounding the platform is Herodian, and the altar may belong to the same era. The platform and the great stairway seem to be younger; while the walls south of the platform are perhaps older.

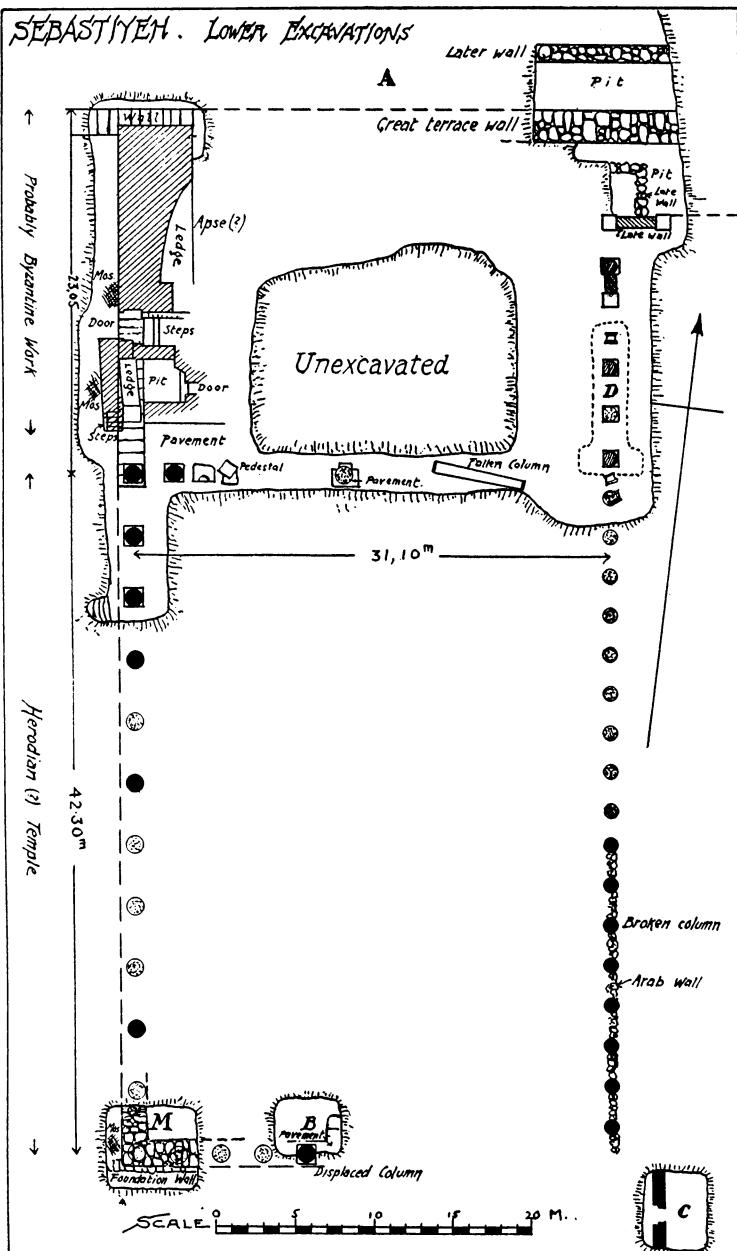
The stele found on the stairway was dedicated by soldiers stationed in Palestine, probably after the great Jewish war under Hadrian (132-134 A.D.). The time and circumstance of the ruin of the edifices upon the summit are unknown. The stone of which they were built, taken in part from older structures, was used over and over by later builders.

Some of our most promising discoveries came so late in the season's work that we could not follow up the clues which they offered. Having for good reasons chosen August 21 as the date for closing the work of digging, we could not go on longer, however many questions were left unanswered. The campaign of 1909 should answer some of these; and we hope it may be rich in the finds of Hebrew origin.

1. PLAN OF SEASTIVEH, SHOWING ANCIENT WALL, VILLAGE, AND  
POINTS OF EXCAVATION



SÉBASTIYEN. LOWER EXCAVATIONS



2. PLAN OF THE EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE VILLAGE

## SEBASTIYEH

**EXCAVATIONS  
ON  
SUMMIT**

190

	First Post-Jewish per.	Third(ly) do.
Second do.		
Restorations		
original trenches		

Edge of second terrace

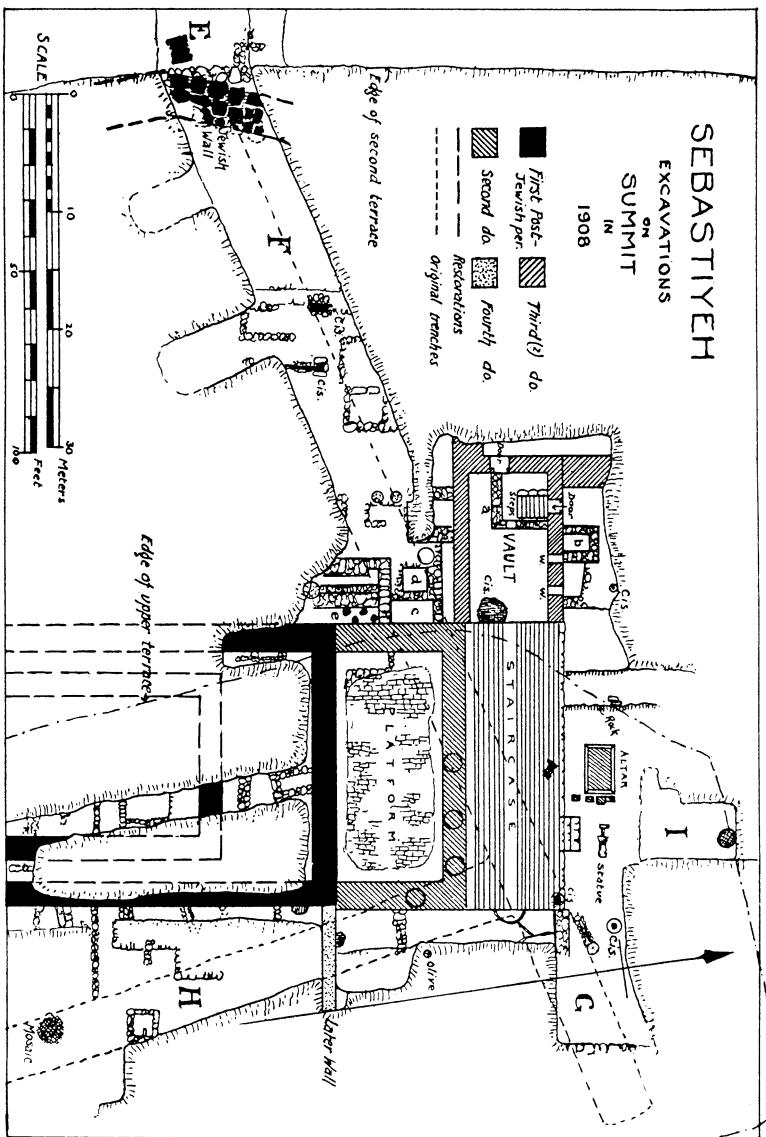
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- 1 -

A vertical scale bar with a horizontal top edge. The word "SCALE" is written vertically along the left side. Horizontal tick marks are labeled "10", "20", and "30" from top to bottom. Below the "30" label, the word "METERS" is written horizontally, followed by "Feet" at the very bottom.



### 3. PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS ON SUMMIT AND TERRACES

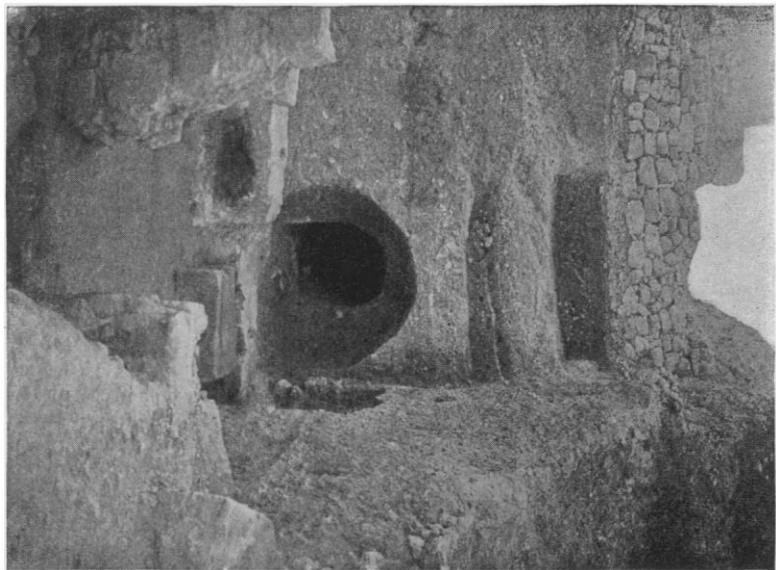


4. NORTHEAST CORNER OF EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE VILLAGE,  
LOOKING SOUTH

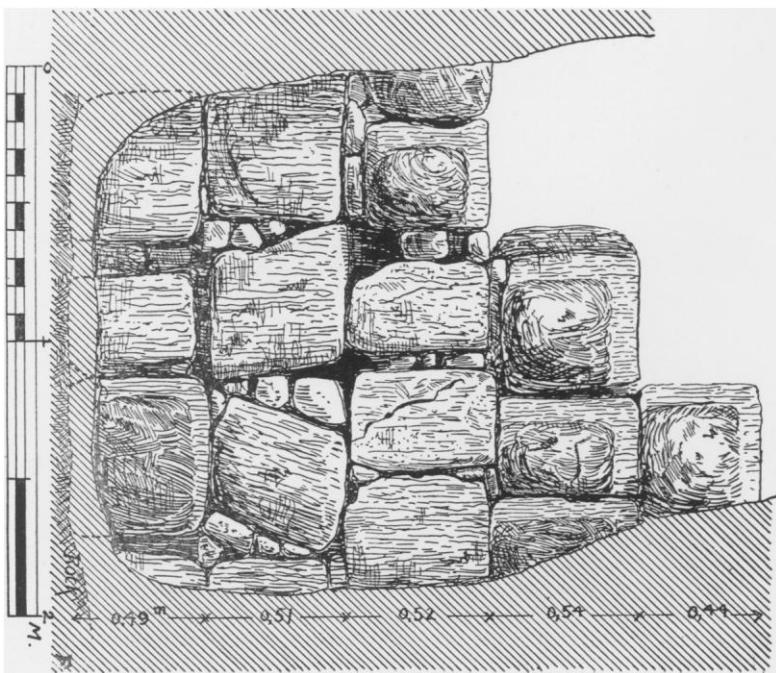


5. NORTHWEST CORNER OF EXCAVATIONS NEAR THE VILLAGE,  
LOOKING SOUTH

6. EASTERN END OF TRENCH E, LOOKING EAST

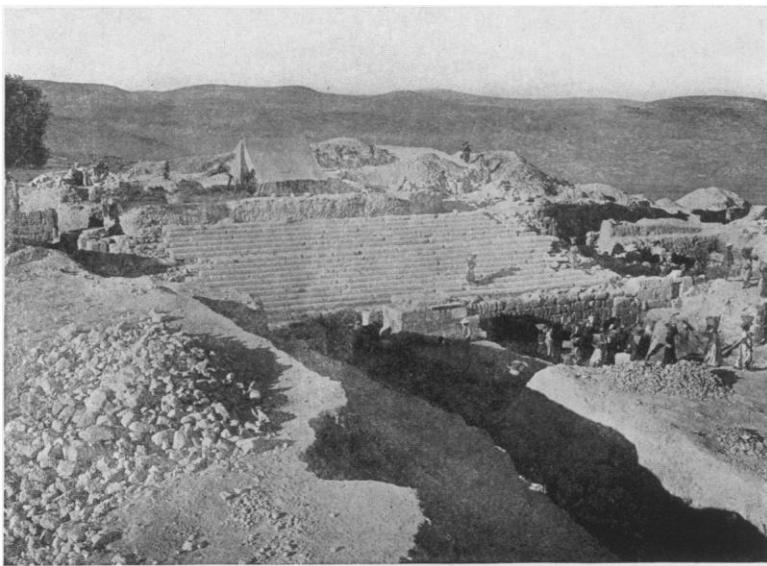


7. WESTERN FACE OF HEBREW WALL, TRENCH E





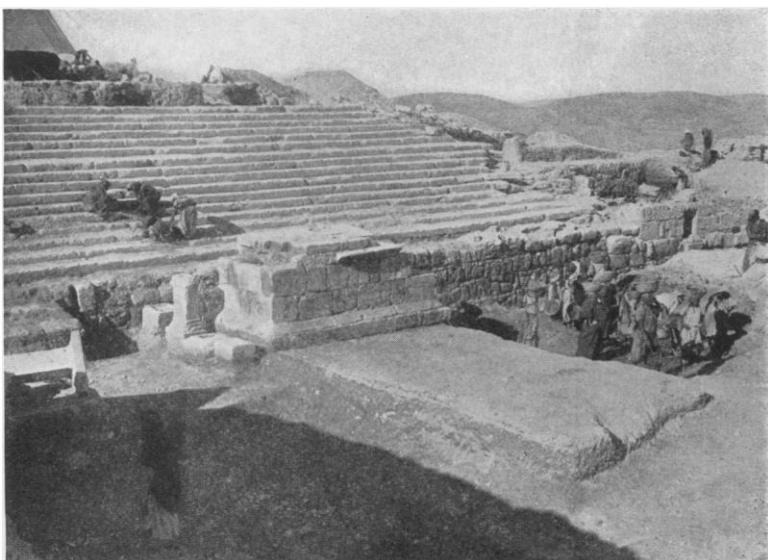
8. SECTION OF SUMMIT, SHOWING STRATIFICATION OF DÉBRIS,  
LOOKING NORTH



9. GENERAL VIEW OF SUMMIT EXCAVATIONS, LOOKING SOUTHWEST



10. ALTAR WITH STONE APPROACH THERETO, LOOKING EAST



11. ALTAR AFTER REMOVAL OF APPROACH, LOOKING SOUTHWEST



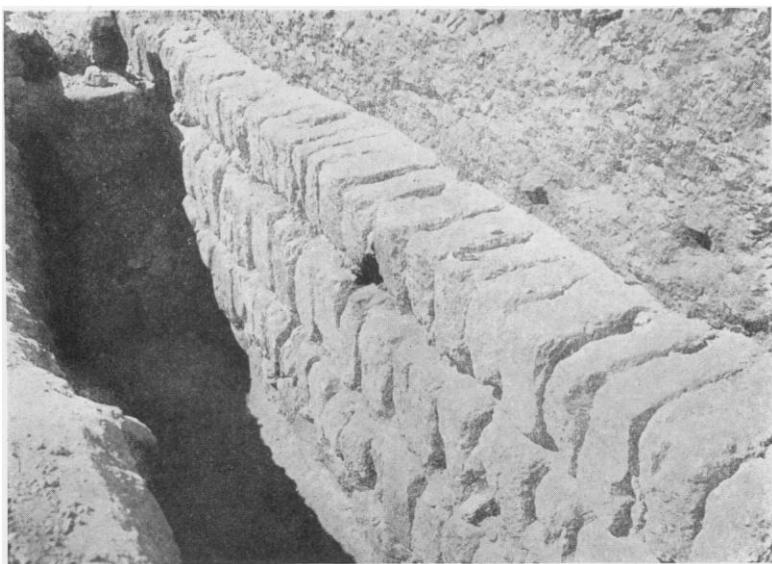
12. VAULTED CHAMBER, NORTHWEST CORNER, LOOKING EAST  
OF NORTH



13. VAULTED CHAMBER AND STAIRWAY, LOOKING SOUTHEAST



14. WALL ON EAST SIDE OF STAIRWAY AND PLATFORM, LOOKING SOUTHWEST



15. FOUNDATION OF WALL RUNNING SOUTH, CONTINUING WALL OF FIG. 14, LOOKING SOUTHWEST

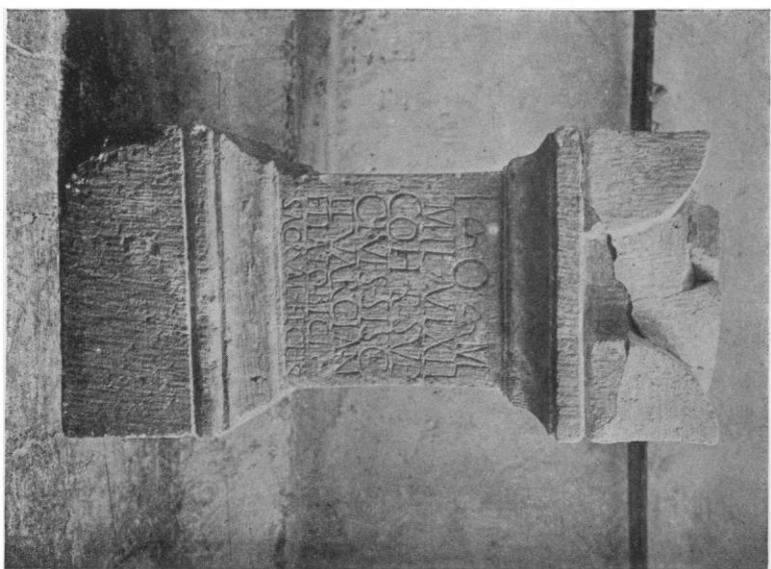


16. PLATFORM AT HEAD OF STAIRWAY, LOOKING WEST



17. TRENCH BETWEEN STAIRWAY AND PLATFORM, LOOKING WEST

18. INSCRIBED STELE FOUND ON STAIRWAY,  
NEAR BOTTOM STEP



19. TRENCH I, SHOWING STATUE, LOOKING  
NORTH





20. NEARER VIEW OF STATUE, LOOKING SOUTH



21. FRAGMENT OF LARGE HEAD FROM SOUTHERN EDGE OF SUMMIT